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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; BOLIVIAN PRESIDENT EVO MORALES AND
VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ; US-LATAM; CHINA; 08/22/07

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Leading international stories today focus on Bolivian President Evo Morales' attempt to amend his country's Constitution in search of indefinite re-election, along the lines of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's "model;" a Zogby International opinion poll revealing that Latin America is little known to the US public; and the ever increasing economic importance of China.

2. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "Chvez, Morales and absolute power"

Daily-of-record "La Nacisn" editorializes (08/22) "In 1999, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez wanted to legitimize himself through the amendment of his country's Constitution... The idea of permanently ruling the Bolivarian republic... has since led a good deal of his initiatives...

"... Facing a new constitutional reform based on an unhidden ambition to obtain indefinite re-election, Chavez attempted to expand his ideas through the Andean region. He managed to do so in Bolivia and Ecuador, through the triumph of Evo Morales and Rafael Correa, but he failed in Per with the defeat of Ollanta Humala.

"Particularly in Bolivia, Morales continues being inspired by Chavez. Evidence of this is now his attempt to amend the Constitution in order to ensure absolute power.

"His intention contradicts the need described by Juan Linz, professor of Political Sciences at Yale University, to avoid the temptation to create authoritarian regimes in Latin America. This is to say, it goes against the democratic ideal of a 'pro tempore government' with a legitimacy that is limited in time.

"Both constitutional amendments could leave the two presidents with excessive powers and jeopardize 'the delicate balance of power,' which is the basic defense of democracy against every kind of abuse of power.

"In this way, Venezuela and Bolivia distance themselves from the other countries of the region that adhere to the principles of democracy, and, therefore, they get closer to the Cuban 'model,' with just one difference - that their presidents were popularly elected.

"The situation in Venezuela is particularly serious. Chavez already enjoys a broad delegation of legislative faculties...

"In Bolivia, the opposition still has voice and vote at the Constituent Assembly, although Morales' most disturbing proposals

are focused on indefinite reelection of both himself and his VP, and on the use of 'indigenous autonomies' to dilute the committed 'territorial autonomy' of Eastern provinces.

"The reported proposal made by VP Alvaro Garca Linera to create a diffuse fourth 'branch of Government' in charge of the 'social control' of the government's action is also concerning.

"... The two proposals lack the democratic spirit that should be commonplace in the region."

- "An opinion poll reveals that Americans know nothing about Latin America"

Ana Baron, leading "Clarn's" Washington-based correspondent, writes (08/22) "... The US public's little knowledge about our region is totally surprising. While practically all US homes do have a TV set and most of them have Internet access, 90% do not know who Lula is..., and this is not everything. Most Americans do not know even who Mexican President Felipe Caldersn is... A Zogby International opinion poll reveals that only 20 per cent of 7,362 Americans interviewed said that they knew who Caldersn is and barely 10 per cent said they knew Lula.

"As per the opinion poll, the three countries perceived as the US top allies are Mexico, Brazil and Costa Rica. Argentina, a country that currently raises much distrust at the US Department of State, stands fourth, while Colombia (a country that has had a strong alliance with the US for four years) is perceived as one of its worst enemies, along with Cuba and Venezuela.

"... The opinion poll revealed that the only Latin American leaders that Americans do know well are Fidel Castro, from Cuba, and Hugo Chvez, from Venezuela, the two leaders that are in the US Department of State's loop. Nevertheless, most Americans disagree with US President Bush's policy on Cuba. 58 per cent said they favor

resumption of talks between Washington and Havana on future ties between the two countries, while 56 per cent said they are in favor of lifting the embargo imposed on the island."

- "Chinese high-technology exports increase by the day"

Business-financial "El Cronista" carries an opinion piece by Jorge Castro, head of the Institute for Strategic Planning, who opines (08/22) "... The structure of Chinese exports is increasingly similar to that of highly developed countries (the US, EU, Japan), and it is not related to the number of resources and the level of development of the Popular Republic. This means that the per capita income associated with Chinese exports is much higher than the average per capita income of the country having the largest population in the world.

"This is an increasing and accelerated trend. This means that the range of high-technology products which G3 countries export but not China for now, is increasingly smaller and will disappear in no more than ten years... The change in China's exports structure is the outcome of the multinationalization of its economy and the increasing importance of multinational corporations in its exporting sector.

"The main strategic point is that China's share in international trade versus its GDP is the highest one in the emerging world and one of the highest in the world - 75 per cent...

"There could not be a greater strategic mistake than disregarding China's importance in the current stage of globalization."

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